

VA**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

News Release

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Washington, DC -- Noted actor and two-time Emmy Award winner Dennis Franz will chair the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) 1998 National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, the department is announcing.

The National Salute Program, begun in 1974 to honor hospitalized veterans for their service and sacrifices in behalf of the nation, is held at VA's medical centers, nursing homes, and state veterans homes during the week that includes Valentine's Day, Feb. 8-14. Franz will visit hospitalized veterans during that week and also will act as spokesman for VA's Voluntary Service program through the year, encouraging the public to volunteer at VA medical facilities.

An Army Vietnam veteran, Franz currently portrays detective Andy Sipowicz on television's popular "NYPD Blue." He first attracted national attention in the role of Lt. Norman Buntz on the acclaimed television series "Hill Street Blues."

Franz is from Maywood, Ill., outside of Chicago. He became interested in acting in high school and pursued that career at Wright Junior College in Chicago and Southern Illinois University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in speech and theater.

After organizing several theater groups in Chicago, he joined the Organic Theater Company, a touring group which launched his acting career. The company's production of "Bleacher Bums," was co-written by Franz and Joe Mantegna. The PBS production of the play won a local Emmy Award.

Franz then worked in Chicago-based films directed by Brian DePalma and Robert Altman. Both encouraged his move to Los Angeles, where he has appeared in numerous television series and continued his film work. He teamed with Bruce Willis in the 1990 film "Die Hard 2: Die Harder," and recently completed "City of Angels" with Meg Ryan and Nicolas Cage. He also worked with Dustin Hoffman in the film version of David Mamet's "American Buffalo," which was released last year. Franz won Emmys for "Lead Actor in a Drama Series" in 1994 and 1996 and received the first Screen Actors Guild award for "Best Actor in a Drama" and "Best Ensemble Acting in a Drama."